



Working with Hospitals to Build Safe Communities

Local Safe Community coalitions should consider inviting hospitals in their area to join the coalition. Hospitals are frequently the hub of a major health care system, as well as large employers in their communities. Hospital expertise and resources can help coalitions set up and operate local injury prevention programs. Coalitions can help hospitals fulfill their community service mission.

This folio is designed to help coalitions recruit their local hospitals.

Why Recruit Hospitals?

Hospital staff often includes professionals involved in prevention, acute care, and rehabilitation. The credibility of these individuals with the public can help frame injury prevention as a healthcare issue and attract attention.

Because hospitals treat the injured, they know the consequence of unsafe behavior. Hospitals can be powerful advocates; their employees help “put a face” on injury. Hospitals also frequently have available injury data from the patients they treat, which can help assess a community’s injury impact and aim resources at curbing injuries.

Hospitals offer:

- ▶ Skills in: injury prevention, education, marketing, fund raising, evaluation, telecommunications, and patient data collection and analysis.
- ▶ Equipment such as: computers, fax machines, color printer, digital camera, and training/presentation equipment.
- ▶ Meeting and event space, training, office, and/or storage space for bike helmets, posters, brochures, and child safety seats they can lend the coalition.
- ▶ Advanced communications capabilities such as: web development, media buying, recording studios, print shops, newsletters or magazines, and radio or TV shows.
- ▶ Employees and volunteers.

Why Join?

Hospitals promote community safety because:

- ▶ Community health is part of their mission. Nationally, injuries amount to 10 percent of physician visits and 37 percent of emergency room visits. In 2000, more than 29.5 million people were treated for injuries in emergency departments.
- ▶ Uncompensated care for injuries affects hospital cost negatively.
- ▶ Many large hospitals have trauma centers, which may be required to engage in injury prevention to maintain their American College of Surgeons designation. Safe Communities can help them do so.
- ▶ Some States mandate hospitals to conduct community benefit activities such as injury prevention.

Benefits for Hospitals

Lower costs can benefit hospitals that choose to work with injury prevention coalitions. In 2000, hospitals, other health providers, and charities absorbed \$33 billion in unpaid charges from motor vehicle crashes. Traffic injuries are costly to treat because often they need high-priced equipment, highly trained personnel, and extended rehabilitation. So, reducing the incidence and severity of preventable injuries lowers a hospital's costs.

In New York, Harlem Hospital Center's Injury Free Coalition For Kids Program, using the Safe Communities approach, halved its pediatric injury treatment rate over 10 years.

Coalitions also offer hospitals:

- ▶ A new channel to extend their reach.
- ▶ Increased positive publicity, to spark hospital selection and new income.
- ▶ An opportunity for good corporate citizenship.
- ▶ Lower community injury rates, fewer injuries among employees and their families, more productivity, and lower employer insurance costs.
- ▶ An outlet for employees frustrated at treating so many preventable injuries.
- ▶ A new opportunity for residents, students, and instructors to do research and evaluation.
- ▶ An ability to lobby for injury prevention and not violate nonprofit rules.
- ▶ Increased community acceptance for injury prevention.
- ▶ An opportunity to combine hospital resources with others.

Understanding Hospitals

Experts' insights on hospitals:

- ▶ A hospital with no trauma center may be less interested in injury prevention. On the other hand, many small community hospitals embrace all local health issues. Children's hospitals may be most receptive to community outreach efforts.
- ▶ Many hospitals are involved in Healthy Communities, which seeks to improve health and quality of life. Assure them that Safe Communities complements this.
- ▶ Hospitals seek ways to obtain a marketing advantage over their community rivals.
- ▶ If a competitor is involved, some hospitals might not participate but others might.
- ▶ Good publicity yields more name recognition and raises public opinion. Show positive press coverage opportunities.
- ▶ Remind administrators they want to reduce unreimbursed care.
- ▶ Many injury prevention champions had experienced family or friends injured in crashes.
- ▶ Know a hospital's chain of command and administrative processes.
- ▶ If a hospital is part of a chain or other large healthcare organization, outsiders may need to obtain corporate clearance before the organization can commit to activities.

Also:

- ▶ Hospitals are compartmentalized; knowing where to start recruiting and find volunteers can be confusing to outsiders.
- ▶ Public and private hospitals have different cultures, so vary your approach.
- ▶ Some workers change employers and jobs often, so recruitment may have lots of starts and stops.
- ▶ Starts and stops can affect involvement; a new hospital staff person may be less committed to Safe Communities than a predecessor.
- ▶ Many hospital staff carry workloads yet may wish to participate fully in the coalition. These individuals may lack time or internal support for the coalition.
- ▶ Hospitals have valuable injury data, but gaining access to it may be difficult or costly.

- ▶ Hospitals are often more technological and organizationally savvy than other nonprofit organizations, which can intimidate other coalition members.

Who?

The hospital representative whom the coalition seeks should be interested in Safe Communities and either hold authority to decide to participate, or access to the decision maker. You need a Safe Communities champion in the hospital, but finding the champion can be tough. Become familiar with the hospital before your coalition approaches it.

Identify coalition members who have hospital contacts. Ask police and emergency response personnel who work with emergency departments to ask their contacts whom you should approach.

Or ask the local medical or hospital association for insight. The community's competitive market will help to suggest a suitable strategy.

If your research does not identify a place to start:

- ▶ Contact the head of the department responsible for the hospital's image, such as:
 - ▶ Public relations
 - ▶ Community relations
 - ▶ Community outreach
 - ▶ Marketing
- ▶ Contact the heads of departments most affected by injury or try individual doctors or nurses who work in:
 - ▶ The emergency department (treats the patient on arrival)
 - ▶ Trauma (provides ongoing acute
 - ▶ care after the emergency)
 - ▶ Pediatrics
 - ▶ Wellness
 - ▶ Orthopedics

Start at the top (for example, Hospital Administrator or Chief of Medicine).

When?

A crash that captures local headlines, while tragic, is an ideal time to raise awareness of the need for injury prevention.

Avoid:

- ▶ Flu season when hospital demand and employee absenteeism may be high.

How?

Once your coalition identifies the right person, tailor your approach:

- ▶ See if your State has a community benefit law, which requires hospitals to be good corporate citizens. This is a compelling reason for hospital participation.
- ▶ See if the local affiliate of a national hospital, doctors or nurses association might be a recruiting partner.
- ▶ Do an informational interview with someone at the hospital. Ask:
 - ▶ What are the hospital's priorities?
 - ▶ What is the hospital now doing about injury prevention?
 - ▶ Who is it partnering with?

Refine your approach:

- ▶ Say: "We need you." Make hospital staff feel important.
- ▶ Buttress your invitation with facts.
- ▶ Use data to show community need.
- ▶ Point out organizations in the coalition.
- ▶ Show how Safe Communities works and cite local achievements.
- ▶ Highlight positive publicity the coalition has gained.
- ▶ Share what other hospitals have done. NHTSA's Safe Communities web site at www.nhtsa.dot.gov/safecommunities includes examples or see the final page of this document.
- ▶ Find ways Safe Communities participation fills a hospital's need, matches its mission, or addresses its priorities.

If competitiveness among multiple hospitals is an issue, use a counter argument:

- ▶ Injury prevention is so important to public health and safety that hospitals have to rise above the politics of competition.

- ▶ Other community hospitals will choose to participate, leaving them to receive the publicity and praise.

Be clear on what you seek from the hospital:

- ▶ Its endorsement.
- ▶ Providing its injury data.
- ▶ Offering a venue for meetings and events and related space and equipment.
- ▶ Evaluation assistance from the hospital's quality or other department.
- ▶ Spokespersons.
- ▶ Stories of patients saved by the safety belt, air bag, or child safety seat.
- ▶ Financial or administrative (in-kind) support.

Act Now!

Coalitions that plan and deliver injury prevention programs will find hospital expertise and resources invaluable. Don't wait to invite your local hospitals to join the vital effort.

Special Thanks

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Prescriptions for Safer Communities

Here are ways hospitals across America have participated in their local Safe Communities coalitions:

- ▶ Buckle-up checkpoints in the hospital
- ▶ parking lot. Buckled-in drivers were rewarded with ice cream from the hospital cafeteria.
- ▶ Child safety seat checkups.
- ▶ Researched the affect of alcohol on the incidence and severity of trauma

treated in the hospital's emergency department.

- ▶ Public Relations staff provided guidance and support for a coalition campaign.
- ▶ Trauma staff have been good resources for news interviews for injury prevention stories.
- ▶ Featured the coalition on the hospital's weekly radio show or in-house newsletters.
- ▶ Gave coalition a free booth at a hospital-sponsored fun run or community health fair.
- ▶ Trained coalition members in proper child safety seat installation.
- ▶ Purchased fatal vision goggles and loaned them to others in coalition.

Also:

- ▶ Created motor vehicle safety program for older drivers.
- ▶ Distributed Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS) safe driving materials to its employees.
- ▶ Recruited staff to distribute safety literature on street corners.
- ▶ Built playgrounds to give children an alternative to playing in the streets.
- ▶ Instructed school children on vehicle occupant and pedestrian safety.
- ▶ Worked with local museums and schools to build safety streets.
- ▶ Trained Hispanic advocates to go into schools to train other parents on safety issues.

Hospitals also can purchase items such as child safety seats for all newborns, bicycle helmets for a bike rodeo, etc. Many hospitals have foundations which can help a Safe Communities coalition, especially hospitals which are part of the National Children's Hospital Network. For more insight into what hospitals can achieve through their Safe Communities coalitions, see these web sites:

- ▶ Cape Girardeau (MO) Safe Communities:
www.cityofcapegirardeau.org/depts/police/safe.html
- ▶ Dallas Injury Prevention Center:
www3.utsouthwestern.edu/parkland/ipc/realindex.htm
- ▶ Harlem Hospital Center: www.injuryfree.org/site_display.cfm?PermanentId=27CE86C5-D546-40F6-AB7227EEBBE50E10
- ▶ Providence (RI) Safe Communities Partnership (Hasbro Children's Hospital): www.edc.org/buildingsafecommunities/vol1_1/injcntrl.htm
- ▶ Riley Hospital for Kids (Indianapolis, IN) "Safety Smart: Developing and Maintain an Integrated Injury Control System":

www.rileyhospital.org/document.jsp?locid=1534

